The Representation of African Civil Wars in Australian and New Zealand Refugee Scholarship

by

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Abstract

This article aims to disrupt the grand-narrative about African civil wars in Australian and New Zealand refugee scholarship. To that end, this article investigates the impact of the Cold War and European colonialism in political conflicts that have produced millions of refugees in Africa to illustrate the point that many of the conflicts from which African refugees fled from are partly attributable to the actions of Western powers. This study also argues that the refugee crises in Africa are partly a product of a global system that has been shaped by colonialism and white supremacy, with a key finding that the political analyses of African civil conflicts and wars in Australian and New Zealand refugee scholarship largely focuses on issues such as ethnocentrism or African dictators, without highlighting the global historical context within which African political conflicts occur. Thus, this article shows that this ahistorical reading of African political conflicts enable Australian and New Zealand scholarship on African refugees to conveniently leave out 'unthinkable facts' in the framework of Western thought about Africa.

Keywords: African refugees, cold war, colonialism, African civil wars, Australia, New Zealand

Introduction

This article aims to disrupt the grand-narrative about African civil wars in Australian and New Zealand refugee scholarship. To that end, this article investigates the impact of the Cold War and European colonialism in political conflicts that have produced millions of refugees in Africa to illustrate the point that many of the conflicts from which African refugees fled from are partly attributable to the actions of Western powers. The term civil war is used in this article to refer to a war or a political conflict between opposing groups within the same country/region in Africa. The ultimate objective of this paper is to explore and highlight the influence of the Africanist discourse on the way in which the Australian and the New Zealand refugee scholarship discusses civil wars in Africa.

The Africanist discourse refers to texts written about Africa by Western authors (Gruesser, 1990) that dates back to the 19th century. One of the defining features of the Africanist discourse before the 19th century was the 'guess-work' upon which knowledge about Africa was generated (Miller, 1985). This approach to knowledge creation saw information shaped "about itself rather than shaped by the inquiry, creating the illusion of a 'pre-existing essence'" (Miller, 1985, p. 21). This paper argues that Christopher Miller's (1985) '*Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*' "supplies a useful theoretical framework for understanding works about Africa by Western writers" (Gruesser, 1990, p. 6). It is worth noting that Miller's (1985) book builds on Michel Foucault's analyses of discursive systems, as well as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Gruesser, 1990).

Building on Said, Miller (1985) claims that "if the Orient is a reverse image in the mind of Europe, then Africa, as a third term in the equation, is nothing, less real than either the West or the East, and thus filled with a myriad of fantasies of the European imagination" (Gruesser, 1990, p. 6).

There is a dearth of refugee literature in Australia and New Zealand that aims "to delineate both the distortions and the powerful influence of Africanist discourse" (Gruesser, 1990, p. 5) on the study of African civil wars that have produced millions of refugees, and continue to produce thousands of refugees. The political analyses of African civil conflicts and wars in Australian and New Zealand refugee scholarship largely focuses on issues such as "tribalism", ethnocentrism or African dictators, without highlighting the global historical context within which African political conflicts occur. Thus, this discursive approach to African civil wars is consistent with the Eurocentric framework that often portrays African civil wars "as a contest between brutes" (Mamdani, 2009, p. 19), or as "theatre of devastating armed conflicts" (Ratsimbaharison, 2011, p. 269).

This article deconstructs this Africanist discourse and challenges the Eurocentric meta-narrative on African civil wars by carefully documenting the ways in which European colonialism and the Cold War contributed to the conflicts and the civil wars that have produced millions of refugees in the Horn of Africa and in Sudan. This is achieved by critically and concisely exploring the history of the Horn of Africa and Sudan. The latter, as well as the countries in the Horn of Africa are regarded as the top refugee-producing countries on the continent.

Black people in Australia and New Zealand

The last three decades have seen a substantial number of African refugees being resettled in Australia and New Zealand. According to Ndhlovu (2014), the number of people born in Africa rose in Australia from about 250, 000 in 2006 to around 338, 000 in 2011. It is worth noting, however, that nearly half of all Australians of African origin are white South African migrants (Phillips, 2011).

There are around 13,464 Black people residing in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). Most Black people living in New Zealand came to the country via humanitarian efforts. Research about Black people in New Zealand and in Australia largely focuses on Africans who have come to these countries through humanitarian efforts. Thus, many research projects often use the grand narrative of refugee resettlement and refugee integration to research Black people in Australia and New Zealand. I have written in depth and critiqued the grand narrative of refugee resettlement and refugee integration somewhere else (see, Majavu 2017, Majavu 2015).

The refugee resettlement and refugee integration paradigm foregrounds, among other things, the trauma that African refugees have experienced pre-resettlement. Within this discursive framework, the pre-resettlement experiences of African refugees are discussed within a superficial understanding and analysis of African civil wars that have and continue to produce African refugees. Consequently, the Australian and New Zealand refugee literature tends to discuss civil wars in Africa by highlighting local political phenomena such as ethnocentrism and African dictators without rigorously interrogating the ways in which these political phenomena relate to the global political economy.

Take for instance, Ann Beaglehole's book, which is entitled *Refuge New Zealand: A Nation's Response to Refugees and Asylum Seekers*. In chapter four of her book, Beaglehole's (2013) writes about how New Zealand accepted Ugandan refugees in the 1970s. Beaglehole (2013, p. 64) explains that New Zealand accepted 244 Ugandan Asians who were "expelled in the course of President Idi Amin's 'Africanisation' policy."

In the entire book, Beaglehole neither defines the "Africanisation policy" she refers to nor does she show insight about post-independent Ugandan politics. Beaglehole argues that Amin's predecessor, Milton Obote, introduced in 1969 legislation restricting further immigration from

South Asia and the right of non-citizens to hold trade licences. According to Beaglehole (2013), Obote also intended to force the departure of Asians who held British passports. Beaglehole further argues that when Amin came to power in 1971 – 1972, he announced that all Asians were sabotaging the country's economy and must therefore leave Uganda.

Mahmood Mamdani has written extensively on the topic and offers an informed, nuanced, and historically accurate perspective on this subject (Mamdani, 1993; Mamdani, 1975). Beaglehole neither utilises Mamdani's work, nor does she point out the historical fact that the Ugandan Asians were the only African refugees offered overseas resettlement by the UNHCR during the 1960s and 1970s – a volatile political period in Africa (Mamdani, 1993). To fully understand why the West took an exceptional interest in the plight of the Ugandan Asians, one has to locate the rise of Idi Amin to power within the historical context of global politics. Amin came to power with the full support of Britain and Israel. However, soon after taking over the control of the Ugandan state, Amin had a fall-out with his British and Israeli supporters. Consequently, Britain supported efforts to overthrow Amin (Bhagat, 1983). The fall-out between Amin and Britain partly led to the expulsion of Ugandan Asians. Bhagat (1983, 1614) argues that the "expulsion was a direct blow against Britain because most Asian businesses were compradorial extensions of British economic interests." Thus, Britain and its Western allies decided to embarrass Amin by widely publicising the expulsion of Ugandan Asians and offering them overseas resettlement. Beaglehole's book does not account for this history.

Similarly, in their study which is entitled *'It was the most beautiful country I have ever seen': The role of Somali narratives in adapting to a new country*, Ramsden and Ridge (2012) write about the political conflict and civil wars in the Horn of Africa that have produced millions of refugees from an ahistorical perspective. They rightly point out that Somalia is one of the countries generating the highest number of refugees worldwide. According to Ramsden and Ridge (2012, p. 227), Somalis began to migrate to Australia in small numbers in the 1980s; the "largest migration of Somalis began in 1988 when the northern part of the country came under attack from Siad Barre's regime…" According to Ramsden and Ridge (2012) before May 1992, the root of displacement had to do with fighting and drought, whereas after May 1992 the basis of displacement was due to food scarcity. As far as Ramsden and Ridge (2012) are concerned, the ongoing conflict in Somalia, as well as poor seasonal rains and famine, continue to force Somalis to flee their home country. The authors neither touch on the recent involvement of the United States in Somalia nor how the creation of al-Shabaab has helped further destabilise Somalia.

Likewise, Hassan Ibrahim's (2012) PhD briefly explores the history of Somalia. Ibrahim's study which was completed in 2012 at the University of Canterbury, is entitled *From Warzone to Godzone: Towards a new Model of Communication and collaboration Between schools and*

Refugee families. Presumably, the Warzone is the Horn of Africa and the Godzone is New Zealand.

First of all, the contrast of the warzone with Godzone is striking. Secondly, the invocation of a Godzone trope functions to reinforce an old colonial myth that on many levels shapes the national identity of New Zealand – and that is "the notion that the country is special" (King, 2003, p. 509). Richard John Seddon, one of the country's great political leaders, once expressed this idea by referring to New Zealand as 'God's Own Country' (King, 2003). According to King (2003, p. 282), the New Zealand liberal government of the early 20th century felt that the programmes it had introduced to the country had achieved something in the country that offered an example to humankind as a whole:

> The view emerged that, with votes for women, old age pensions and labour legislation in particular, New Zealand was 'showing the way' to the rest of the world - that Seddon's 'God Own Country' was, among other things, a social laboratory which other countries could study with envy and profit.

The Godzone might have been a social laboratory for white settlers; for Maori it was a colonial project; for the Chinese it was a *Herrenvolk* state. Having invoked the colonial trope of a Godzone, Ibrahim (2012, p. 12) gives the historical background to the ongoing conflict in Somalia by pointing out that:

> Fighting occurred between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Somali-dominated Western region in 1978 and led to the formation of Somali opposition movements in Ethiopia. The military government was overthrown in 1991, but the power vacuum created was too difficult for the clan-based factions to fill. Despite many reconciliation meetings, the clan-based factions failed to agree on the formation of a broad-based government and this led to inter-clan fighting between the warring factions in 1991. The resulting widespread war and famine forced many Somalis to seek refuge in other countries, including New Zealand.

This is certainly part of the historical context within which the war took place. However, this is not the full story – I outline the key events of that historical narrative in the 'discussion section' below. Instead of exploring the history behind the war further, Ibrahim (2012) moves on to discuss the 'Historical Overview of Somali Education' and, for the rest of thesis, he never discusses again the history of some of the conflicts between different states in the Horn of Africa or some of the geo-political factors behind the civil wars in that part of the world.

In her research study, entitled *Spaces to Speak: Challenging Representations of Sudanese Australians*, Nunn (2010) concisely explores the history of South Sudan. Nunn (2010) relies on the US State Department and the US Library of Congress as her main source of information

when discussing the history of Sudan. By relying on the US government's information without corroborating such information with some of the work done by scholars (Mamdani, 2009; O'Fahey, 1977; Prah, 2006) who have been researching these issues in Africa for decades, undermines the credibility of Nunn's (2010) scholarship.

Similarly, Marlowe, Harris and Lyons' (2013) anthology, entitled *South Sudanese diaspora in Australia and New Zealand: Reconciling the past with the present*, has very little to say about the history of Sudan or the impact of the Cold War on the civil wars that have occurred in that country. Marlowe, Harris and Lyons (2013, p. 4), the editors of the anthology, argue in the introduction of the book that whilst the warfare that has plagued the country since independence in 1956:

> ... can be conceptualised as a conflict between Islamic Arabs based in the north and southern black Christians, several writers maintain that this history cannot be simply viewed as conflicts between ethnic or religious identities as there have been contentious debates about access to natural resources – most notably oil.

Marlowe, Harris and Lyons' (2013) anthology neither seriously explores the impact of the Cold War on Sudan's political conflicts, nor do they rigorously investigate the role of Israel in Sudan's deadly political conflicts. In fact, none of the seventeen chapters of the Marlowe, Harris and Lyons' (2013) anthology even attempts to make sense of this history.

I argue in this paper that the omission of the global historical context within which African political conflicts occur is revealing because it is consistent with the Eurocentric meta-narrative on civil wars in Africa, which overlooks the impact of European colonialism and Cold War on African civil wars. The Eurocentric meta-narrative on civil wars in Africa establishes frames of reference and intellectual themes that are henceforth considered to be important and relevant, while simultaneously, it excludes inconvenient historical facts from public scrutiny (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Mamdani (2009, p. 19) explains that the way in which the Eurocentric meta-narrative achieves its intellectual dominance is through the Western media, which downplays well-documented analyses and facts, "thereby continually misrepresenting the African continent."

European Colonialism in the Horn of Africa

This article's intent, among other things, is to accurately account for the conflicts that have produced millions of refugees in the Horn of Africa. This is achieved by disentangling geo-

political causal factors that have led to the conflicts which produced millions of refugees in that part of the world. A geo-political analysis of the Horn of Africa requires a thorough examination of interacting factors which include historical legacies, ethnic and religious division, as well as the colonial partition of the region and "accompanying irredentist and separatists-inspired violence," the Cold War, the war on terror and "the manifest intervention by external powers" (Assefaw, 2006, p. 24). Such an academic exercise requires a proper historical framing of African political events within a global political economy.

The Horn of Africa has always played a vital role in the geopolitics of the continent (Novati, 2008). After all, three of the world's great religions (i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam) have contested in the Horn for over a thousand years producing fierce nationalist conflicts (Novati, 2008). Consequently, as Novati (2008, p. 42) points out, kinship and religious affinities in the Horn "transcend national borders which are contested and have generally been badly demarcated and hence constitute a permanent threat to the political order." Before colonialism, the borders in the Horn were determined by two factors:

> On the one hand, Ethiopia imposed a policy that centralized power around the dynasty, the national Christian Church and a feudal mode of production based upon agriculture. On the other hand, the government of Somalia, or more accurately the different authorities which have administered the lowlands inhabited by Somali-speaking peoples, predominantly Muslim, was always fluid and volatile, mirroring the anarchism and clanism that are more suitable in a physical and social environment where nomadism and pastoralism prevail (Novati, 2008, p. 42).

Italian colonialism of the Horn added another dimension to the notion of statehood in the Horn. Through the Africa Orientale Italiana (AOI), Italy created an administrative political structure which grouped together the countries of the Horn, that is, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, minus Northern Somaliland, which was under the British (Selassie, 2003). According to Novati (2008), the Italian colonialism of the Horn proved to be a critical moment for the formation of all states and nations in the Horn.

The Italian colonial project in the Horn was based on the view that the political character of the region could be changed by manipulating the hierarchical balance of the elites and major ethnic groups (Novati, 2008). Thus, to advance its colonial project, Italy's colonial administration in the Horn exploited issues of identity such as religion, culture and shared values (Novati, 2008).

To that end, Italy separated Ogaden, a province occupied by Somali-speaking nomads, from Ethiopia, and "annexed to Somalia as part of a project of ethnonational homogeneity" (Novati, 2008, p. 43). This had far-reaching consequences, for it later stimulated Pan-Somalism – a notion rooted in the reunification of an "idealized Somali nation" (Novati, 2008). Furthermore, in the

north of Ethiopia territory was separated from the Empire to enlarge Eritrea with a view to preparing the effective transformation of Italy's colonia primogenita (first-born colony) into an established society in quest of nationhood (Novati, 2008).

However, after the Second World War, Italy lost all its colonies in the Horn (Negash, Papa, & Taddia, 2003). According to Novati (2008), the terms of the 1947 Peace Treaty signed after the Second World War forced Italy to formally abandon all of its colonies. Further, "the Peace Treaty acknowledged full sovereignty to Ethiopia" (Novati, 2008, p. 44). The terms of the Peace Treaty further stipulated that the final destiny of Italian colonies would be determined by the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union, "or, if no deal was struck within a year, by the United Nations" (Novati, 2008, p. 44). Eritrea was proclaimed an autonomous unit federated to Ethiopia, whereas Somalia was assigned to Italian trusteeship for a period of ten years (Novati, 2008). Italy's influence in Somalia was limited by the enduring British influence in the former British Somaliland, until that was combined with the former Italian colony to form the Republic of Somalia that became independent in 1960 (Novati, 2008). At the moment of Somalia's independence:

> Somali nationalism claimed that national self-determination required that the French colony of Djibouti, reckoned as a Somali territory, the Ogaden and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya be co-opted into the new state, however, this Greater Somalia project, alias the unification of all Somali lands initially sponsored by Britain, was rejected practically by everyone, especially in Africa (Novati, 2008, p. 45).

The point in the foregoing historical discussion is to illustrate that the boundaries that were created by European colonisers in Africa were created mainly to suit the interests of European colonial powers (Selassie, 2003). According to Westin (1999, p.26), Africanists in general agree that one root cause of the severe political conflicts haunting the continent dates back to the arbitrarily drawn boundaries settled by the European imperial powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884 - 1885. This observation partly explains why the Horn of Africa has had one of the longest wars in modern times, lasting 30 years (Selassie, 2003). The Eritrean war of independence against Ethiopia lasted 30 years and produced millions of refugees. In fact, all five countries of the Horn of Africa (that is, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and the Sudan) have been, in the past decades, the scene of conflicts rooted in disputes over colonial borders, and have, as a result, produced millions of refugees (Selassie, 2003).

European Colonialism in Sudan

Sudan was colonised and ruled by Britain from 1899 (Makinda, 1993). In principle, Britain and Egypt jointly ruled Sudan through the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium; however, in reality the

Condominium empowered the British to be the full colonial authority over Sudan (Makinda, 1993). The British colonial authority there, like everywhere else on the continent, was based on the political strategy of divide and rule. Thus, the British ruled northern and southern Sudan as two different entities, according to Makinda (1993). For historic reasons, many northerners Sudanese claim Arab descent (Dean, 2000), while southern Sudanese look to Africa south of the Sahara as an identity platform linked to descent and place and to legitimate claims (Makinda, 1993).

When Britain withdrew from Sudan, it circumvented the legal process established between the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium and granted formal independence based on a temporary constitution drafted by the British without dealing with historically important issues of whether Sudan would become a unitary or federal state and with a secular or Islamic constitution (Ayers, 2010). According to Ayers (2010), Sudan's nationalists aligned with two dominant Islamic sects to mobilise electoral support, and that effectively eroded the possibility of building a broad-based national political movement.

Consequently, at independence, southern Sudanese were largely excluded from constitutional negotiations and the "Sudanisation" process (Ayers 2010). Post-independent nation building in Sudan revolved around constructing Sudan as an Arab country (Ayers, 2010). This led the southerners to demand a federation with a separate advisory council for the south and an assurance of their religious freedom (Makinda, 1993). The Khartoum government at the time refused to give legitimacy to these demands. As a result, Southern leaders formed a revolutionary organisation called Anya Nya and fought the Khartoum-based government for 17 years (Makinda, 1993). The first civil war in Sudan officially ended in 1972, when Jaafar Nimeiri's government and Anya Nya signed a peace agreement in Addis Ababa, giving the south regional autonomy. However, in 1983, Nimeiri revoked the north-south Addis Ababa Peace Agreement and instituted Islamic law. That triggered an armed rebellion in the south that led to the renewal of the civil war (Medani, 2012).

What also intensified the second civil war was a series of economic grievances that the southerners had relating to oil that had been discovered at Bentiu in the south in 1978 by an American firm, Chevron (Makinda, 1993). According to Makinda (1993), southern Sudanese were of the view that the Nimeiri government wanted to incorporate Bentiu into the north in order for the north to benefit from the oil. Moreover, the southerners resented the Nimeiri government's decision to build the Jonglei canal to make for a more:

... efficient use of water from the Nile without consulting them. The southerners felt that the canal would disrupt some of their communities and that the extra water generated would benefit northern Sudan and Egypt rather than southern Sudan (Makinda, 1993, p. 128).

The second civil war was devastating for southern Sudan. According to Medani (2012), by the time the cease-fire was brokered in 2003, more than 2 million southerners, most of them civilians, had been killed. The war generated over four million refugees (Haynes, 2007). Medani (2012, p. 287) points out that "the sheer magnitude of human suffering led to stronger calls for self-determination in the South and increasing support for an orderly 'separation' of the two regions by the international community." The second civil war ended in 2005 with the signing of the North / South Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which culminated in the secession of the Southern provinces (Medani, 2012).

The Cold War in the Horn of Africa

The root of the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in the 1970s lay in the Ethiopian claim that Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti are part of Ethiopia (Assefaw, 2006); while, on the other hand, Somali nationalism considered Ogaden to be part of Somalia (Novati, 2008). It is against this historical background that, in 1977, the military junta that in 1974 had overthrown Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, "was rocked by Somalia's invasion of the Ogaden, a region in eastern Ethiopia inhabited by ethnic Somalis" (Gleijeses, 2006, p. 13). At the request of the Ethiopian junta's chairman, Mengistu Haile Mariam, Cuba sent military troops to Ethiopia to help repel the attacks (Gleijeses, 2006). According to Gleijeses (2006, p. 13), "critics charge that the Cubans intervened at the behest of the Soviet Union."

Gleijeses (2006) concedes that the Cuban operation in Ethiopia was indeed coordinated with and supported by the Soviet Union. In fact, for most of the 1970s and 1980s, the Horn of Africa was used by the United States and the Soviet Union as a proxy for Cold War. Both superpowers attempted to influence the ideological orientation of local actors in the region through arms and aid (Lefebvre, 1996). Between 1974 and 1978, the United States was "militarily entrenched" in Ethiopia, and the Soviet Union was aligned with Somalia and Sudan (Luckham & Bekele, 1984). From 1977 to 1978, the United States switched allegiance and was aligned to Siad Barre's murderous regime in Somalia, whereas the Soviet Union established military relationship with Ethiopia. Up until the late 1980s, both the US and the Soviet Union assisted the governments of these two countries financially and militarily. Through this military support from the two superpowers, these two countries waged war against each other and engaged in civil wars that have produced millions of refugees.

Another external force that has played a pivotal role in the politics of the Horn of Africa is Israel. According to Lefebvre (1996), Ethiopia and Israel were drawn together by their mutual fear of Arab and Islamic encirclement. Lefebvre (1996, p. 394) adds that even when Ethiopian military junta chairman Mengistu Haile Mariam publicly terminated the Israeli connection in 1978, "there

were several subsequent instances of secret and informal cooperation between the two states." Throughout the Eritrean war of independence against Ethiopia, Israel supported Ethiopia in one way or another. Lefebvre (1996) argues that Israel viewed the war in Eritrea as a southerly extension of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was partly due to the fact that when the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) launched its war of secession against Ethiopia in 1962, Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser permitted the EPLF to establish its headquarters in Cairo where members of the EPLF received military training as well. Another strong ally of the EPLF was North Sudan. During Eritrea's 30-year struggle for independence, North Sudan was the most important regional ally for the Eritrean resistance (Lefebvre, 1996).

Ayers (2010, p. 161) further points out that "following the 1967 Arab–Israeli war, Sudan had aligned more closely with the Arab League." While North Sudan gave support to the Eritrean resistance, Ethiopia helped Israel assist the Anya Nya rebels who were fighting against North Sudan for their own independence. Ethiopia allowed Israel to establish military centres to train the rebels. Moreover, according to Collins (2007), Israel brought Anya Nya officers to Israel to attend short courses in weapons and explosives, as well as radio transmissions. Many Arab states viewed Israel's military support for Ethiopia a political threat (Medani, 2012). According to Medani (2012), prior to the Israeli victory in the Six Day War, Arab concern over events in Ethiopia was minimal, however, the Six Day War meant the closure of the Suez Canal and that increased the significance of the Bab-al-Mandab strait, which links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. It is for this reason that Lefebvre (1996) argues that in addition to being driven by ideological reasons, Israel's involvement in the Horn has also been about making sure that the Red Sea did not "become an Arab Lake" from which Arab states could threaten Israeli shipping in the southern Red Sea region.

The end of the Cold War brought an end to the financial and military support that some regimes in the Horn received from the superpowers. Without external aid, dictators in countries such as Ethiopia and Somalia were overthrown by warlords and armed factions (Loescher, 2001). As a result, the overthrow of Mengistu Haile Mariam regime in Ethiopia led to the independence of Eritrea. The fall of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia also had an impact on the civil war between north and south Sudan. For instance, the fall of Mengistu's regime resulted in the southern Sudanese revolutionary organization, Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), losing its strategic bases in Ethiopia (Medani, 2012). These political developments enabled north Sudan "to impose punishing blows on the southern population in 1992 and 1994 and a self-proclaimed holy war (Jihad) against the south" (Medani, 2012, p. 284). By the early 1990s, North Sudan was considered the hub of an "Islamist revolution" within the Horn (Ayers, 2010).

Consequently, the American George Bush (senior) administration supported the political wing of the SPLA, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) as a pro-insurgency force against North Sudan (Ayers, 2010). When Bill Clinton took over from George Bush as US president, he classified North Sudan as a "state-sponsor of 'terrorism'" (Ayers, 2010).

Meanwhile, the fall of the regime of Siad Barre, Somali military dictator, in 1991 left Somalia without a centralised and effective government (Plaut, 2013). Furthermore, since the end of the Cold War, there has been a constant political tension in all five countries in the Horn (Plaut, 2013). Post-Cold War conflicts in the Horn of Africa have taken on changing forms and patterns, and new ones have emerged (Cliffe, Love, & Tronvoll, 2009). For instance:

> Ethiopia and Eritrea are in a state of near-conflict along their common border. Ethiopian troops are inside Somalia, attacking al Shabab, while Eritrea is accused of putting resources behind rebel movements operating in Ethiopia and Somalia (Plaut, 2013, p. 321).

According to Lefebvre (1996), lying at the root of post-Cold War conflicts in the Horn is the "secularist-Islamist conflict". Thus, "the East-West Cold War and the Ethiopia-Somalia dispute have been replaced by a new cold war in the Horn of Africa between secularist and Islamist governments and political movements" in countries such as Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea and Sudan (Lefebvre, 1995). Plaut (2013) further points out that the Horn has been an arena of political contest since the war on terror erupted with the attacks on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. According to Chomsky (2012), after September 11, the U.S. has strengthened and reformulated its long-standing effort to control the Horn of Africa as a front line in the war on terror. Hence, the ongoing crisis in Somalia may be viewed partly as collateral damage from the war on terror (Chomsky, 2012). The Al-Barakaat case partly illustrates this point.

Al-Barakaat, a Dubai-based Somali remittance network was shut down on the grounds that it was financing Al-Qaeda; providing internet services, and even involved in shipping weapons to terrorists (Warde, 2007). In reality, Al-Barakaat was established to address the needs of Somali immigrants who sent, on regular basis, a significant part of their earnings to their families (Warde, 2007). Following the 1991 collapse of the Somali government and banking system, Al-Barakaat played a significant role in the Somali economy (Warde, 2007).

According to Warde (2007, p. 101), the annual remittances to Somalia "amounted in 2001 to about $500 million, more than it earns from any other economic sector and ten times the amount of foreign aid it receives." The closure of Al-Barakaat resulted in the reduction of such remittances by half, which partly led the country to collapse in starvation among other things (Warde, 2007).

Although the U.S. government eventually conceded that it made a mistake and withdrew its charges against Al-Barakaat, the economic damage had been felt far and wide in Somalia. Beyond the economic impact, the symbolic impact, meaning "the perception that Somalia was

unfairly treated - may have been the most significant and may have played a role in the rise, four years later, of Islamic fundamentalists" (Warde, 2007, p. 102).

Furthermore, the US air strikes in Somalia in 2007 and the US support for the Ethiopian invasion of that country partly led to the creation of al-Shabaab, a fundamentalist religious group which has wreaked havoc in neighbouring countries like Uganda and Kenya (Turse, 2014). Naturally, al-Shabaab has become a major security concern in the region, and to counter that threat the US has funnelled counter-terrorism funds into East Africa and underwritten a stronger Kenyan military (Branch, 2011). According to Branch (2011), "the rise of Islamism in the Horn of Africa put Kenya on the frontlines in the global fight against terrorism." In fact, ever since the 1998 bombing of US embassies in East Africa, which were followed by the US retaliatory strike against Sudan, the US has regarded Africa as the next frontier in the war on terrorism. According to Ploch (2009, p. 70), the US Department of Defence officials claim that "Africa has been, is now and will be into the foreseeable future ripe for terrorists and acts of terrorism."

Conclusion

By exploring the 'unthinkable history' (Trouillot, 1995) of the Horn of Africa and Sudan, this article exposes the influence of the Africanist discourse on mainstream Western scholarship on African refugees that often portrays African conflicts and civil wars as exhaustingly unfathomable even to those who advocate for the cause of Africa. Needless to point out, due to space constraints, the article does not explore each and every historical event that has shaped the politics of the Horn of Africa and Sudan. That would require a book. Therefore, what this paper does is to highlight some of the key historical events that have help perpetuate civil wars in Africa, and thus have contributed in producing the ongoing African refugee situation in the Horn of Africa and Sudan.

Ultimately, the exploration of the impact of the Cold War and European colonialism in political conflicts that produced millions of refugees in Africa is undertaken to illustrate the point that many of the conflicts from which African refugees fled from are partly attributable to the actions of Western powers (Philo, Briant, & Donald, 2013). In other words, the refugee crises in Africa are partly a product of a global system that has been shaped by colonialism and white supremacy.

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118

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119